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MOVEMENT CONTROL
IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

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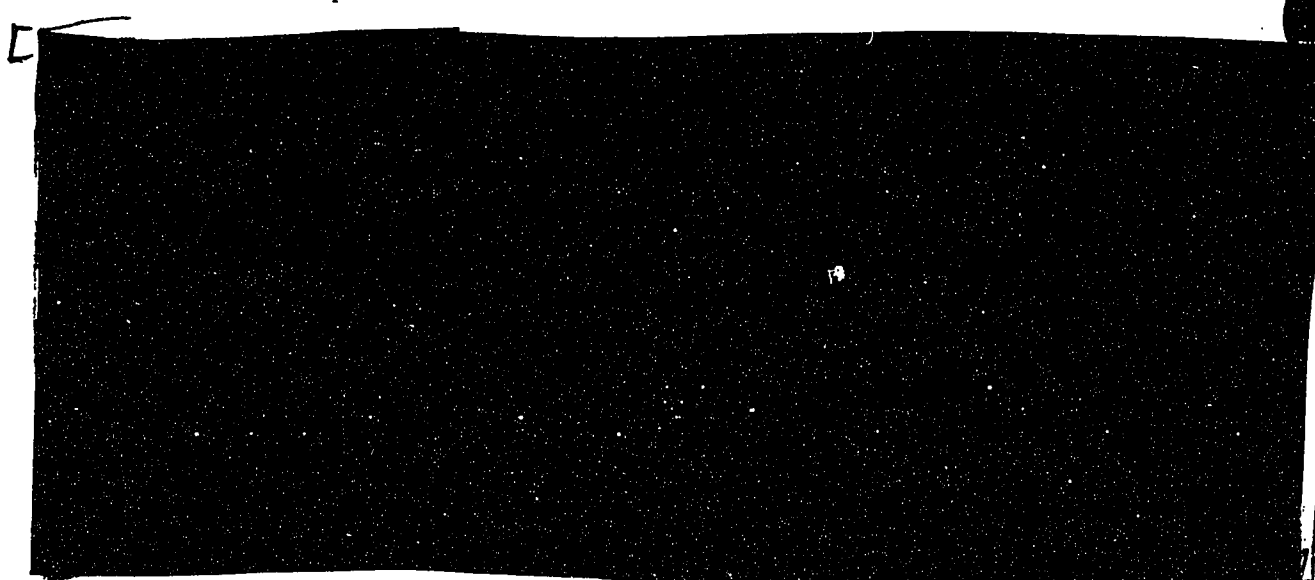
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MOVEMENT CONTROL IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

By the time the United States had evidence of the buildup of Soviet missiles on the island of Cuba, in October 1962, contingency planning for such a situation had been in progress for some two years. Although the basic concept for the operations remained essentially the same, force requirements had increased from time to time on the basis of reevaluation of the enemy's capabilities.



By the beginning of October 1962, CINCLANT was convinced that consideration should be given to relocating and pre-positioning of troops, aircraft, ships, equipment, and supplies in order to develop the highest possible state of readiness to execute his Cuban plans. Accordingly, between 1 and 6 October, he directed CINCAFLANT and CINCPACFLT to take measures required to assure maximum readiness by 20 October.⁵

1. (TS) The Atlantic Command, CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, 1963 (U), p. 20.

2. (TS) Richard Kugler, U.S. Army's Role in the Cuban Crisis, 1962, OCMH Monograph 78M, p. III-17.

3. (TS) Hq USCONARC, Jean R. Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, 1962 (U), p. 7. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, pp. 21-22.

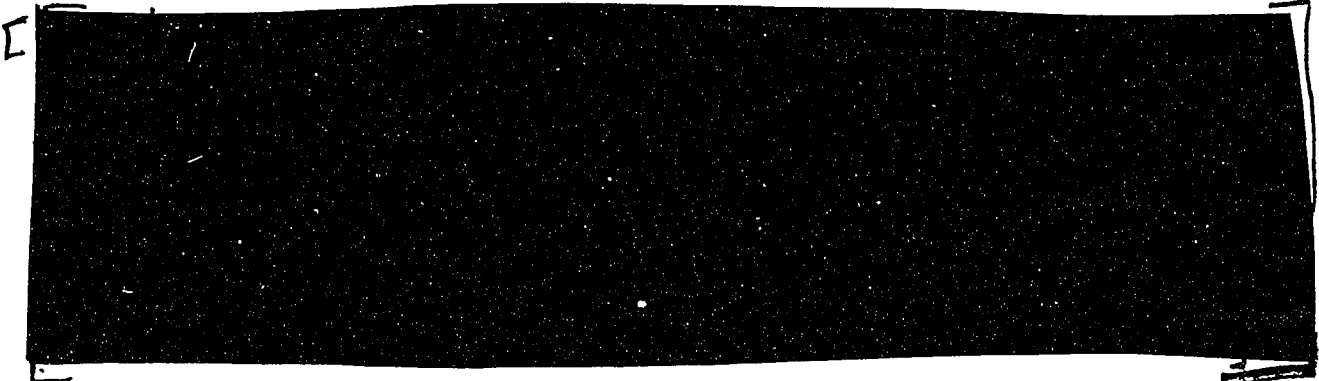
4. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 17.

5. Ibid., pp. 39-40.


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The Joint Chiefs of Staff called a planning conference on 12 October to provide information to the Secretary of Defense on the status of preparations for military operations in Cuba. The conference was to develop specific actions that could be taken to increase the readiness posture of the US Armed Forces and to reduce the reaction lead time. It was a result of this conference that Active Army units assigned to the supporting STRAC OPLANS were given an increased supply priority, although that did not actually occur until 19 October.⁶



On 20 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a warning order regarding the critical situation and alerting CINCSTRIKE to the fact that certain of his Army and Air Force units would pass to the operational control of CINCLANT if any of the latter's plans were implemented.



Organizational arrangements drawn up by CINCLANT envisioned a joint task force under CINCLANT, with Service components.⁸ On 16 October the Department of the Army designated the Commanding General, US Continental Army Command (USCONARC) as the interim Army component commander.⁹ Four days later, CINCLANT informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Commanding General, USCONARC

6. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 9, 65.

7. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

8. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, pp. 20, 22.


9. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 9-10.

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and the Commander of the Tactical Air Command (TAC) had been designated CINCARLANT and CINCAFLANT, respectively, and would serve as interim Army and Air Force component commanders to assist in contingency planning. CINCLANTFLT remained as the naval component commander. CINCLANT intended to exercise operational command of the individual Service task forces through the component commanders.¹⁰

The Joint Chiefs of Staff took a number of preparatory steps in mid-October as it became evident that operations against Cuba might well become necessary.




At a meeting on the evening of 20 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed that the Administration had decided to prepare plans for a sea blockade of Cuba while protecting US territory and shipping and the Guantanamo Naval Base. The purpose was to stop importation of offensive weapons into Cuba.¹²

Preparations for more drastic action against Cuba went on.



On 22 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff took the following actions: established DEFCON 3 for US forces world-wide; decided that US Air Force reserve forces should be called up when required.



authorized the Services to move support units and fillers; and issued instructions for the loading of forces.¹³

10. (S) Msg, CINCLANT to JCS et al., 201716Z Oct 62.

11. (TS) JCS Hist Div, Chronology of JCS Decisions Concerning the Cuban Crisis (U), 4 Jan 63, pp. 12-17.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., pp. 22-29.

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On the afternoon of 22 October, CINCLANT reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had done the following: reinforced Guantanamo Naval Base [REDACTED] evacuated dependents from Guantanamo; requested alert and pre-positioning of MSTs shipping; positioned ships and aircraft for possible blockade of Cuba; readied and alerted all forces as much as possible without actual pre-positioning or adversely affecting special operations; [REDACTED]

At 7:00 p.m., on 22 October, the President announced in a television report the unmistakable evidence of preparation of offensive missile sites in Cuba. He stated that the United States would initiate a strict quarantine of all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba, continue close surveillance of the island, and reinforce the US base at Guantanamo, while evacuating dependents of US personnel there. The President added that he had placed additional military units on standby alert, but he gave no indication of the extent of military preparations already underway.¹⁵

US Army Movements

The task of preparing movement schedules and moving troops to implement CINCLANT's OPLANs was challenging and complex. With the size of the units to be moved, the distances involved, and the shortness of time allowed, the planning staffs of the agencies in Washington and in the field were hard pressed to secure enough equipment and shipping for pre-positioning of forces.

In Washington, the US Army Chief of Transportation had the responsibility for movement of troops and materiel for the Army and, when assigned, for the Navy and the Air Force. He exercised management control over administrative motor transportation and Army use of over-ocean transportation, provided transportation

14. (TS) James F. Schnabel, U.S. Army in the Cuban Crisis, OCMH Monograph, p. 38.

15. "Presidential Television Report on the Soviet Army Buildup in Cuba," 22 Oct 62; Public Papers of the President: John F. Kennedy, 1962 (1963), pp. 806-809.

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engineering services, operated the Military Traffic Management Agency, and administered the Department of Defense activities pertaining to highways for national defense.¹⁶

Subordinate to the Department of the Army in Washington was USCONARC, with headquarters at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Under its control were the six armies of the zone of the interior, including the Third US Army with headquarters at Fort McPherson, Georgia, whose area comprised the southeastern part of the United States.¹⁷

The Chief of Staff, US Army, on 18 October 1962, designated the Commanding General, USCONARC (who had already been named CINCARLANT and who was serving as CINCARSTRICOM) as the coordinating authority for the Department of the Army (DA) for the administrative support of CONARC Army forces employed in CINCLANT contingency plans and for operations conducted in the Western Hemisphere. He charged the Commanding General, USCONARC, with assuming, through emphasis on logistic and personnel actions, the adequate, continuous, and timely support of these Army forces. In addition, the Commanding General, USCONARC, was to be the single point of contact for CINCLANT with appropriate DA elements and commands. In carrying out these duties, he was authorized to deal directly with other DA staff agencies and commands, other military Services, and Department of Defense agencies.¹⁸

The designation of the Commanding General, USCONARC, as DA coordinating authority caused temporary difficulties, since it altered the responsibility for preparing movement schedules.¹⁹ The Commanding General, USCONARC, the next day asked the DA to furnish him four liaison officers: two from the Office of the Chief of Transportation qualified in movements planning, and two from the Army Materiel Command, one qualified and knowledgeable in surface shipping schedules and planned employment of water terminals, and one qualified in supply planning and depot procedures and organization.²⁰

16. U.S. Government Organizational Manual, 1961-1962, p. 163.

17: Ibid.

18. Schnabel, U.S. Army in the Cuban Crisis, p. 19.

19. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, p. 226.

20. (TS) Schnabel, U.S. Army in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 19-20.

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By 21 October 1962 the Chief of Transportation had prepared the surface movement schedule (to be published the following day). At the same time air movement schedules were receiving maximum effort.²³

This transportation planning followed procedures outlined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the beginning of September 1962. The commander originating the basic plan submitted for JCS approval the transportation requirements for the first 30 days, by mode and in 5-day increments, to support a specific operation. USSTRICOM, providing augmentation forces, then prepared detailed

21. Ibid., pp. 47-48.


22. Ibid., p. 48.

23. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

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transportation requirements that could not be met from the transportation resources assigned or attached. These requirements were then submitted to the Services, with movements broken down into three categories: those from home station to aerial or water ports in the continental United States; those from continental US ports to overseas destination; and those direct from home station overseas. The Services were responsible for consolidating the requirements of all their forces; and the consolidated requirements went to the appropriate single manager transportation agencies, who developed the movement schedules.²⁴

Planning for the pre-positioning of force continued, and on 22 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the loading of



On the morning of 23 October many of the supporting units were ordered into the positions they would occupy upon implementation of the plan. Third Army was directed to activate, assemble, and prepare for movement to selected airfields an Army staging areas command headquarters for each staging base. Third Army was also directed to complete activation of Headquarters, Army Staging Area Command (Provisional), and to move it to its designated destination as soon as possible, and to expedite the movement of all the units on the troop list for the Army Staging Area Command.

To carry out his mission as DA coordinating authority for the administrative support of Army forces in the Western Hemisphere, the Commanding General, USCONARC, decided to establish the



24. (S) U.S. Strike Command History 61-62, pp. 54-55.

25. (TS) JCS Hist Div, Chronology of JCS Decisions Concerning the Cuban Crisis (U), 4 Jan 63, pp. 25-29.

26. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, pp. 61 ff.

27. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, p. 73.

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USCONARC directed the Commanding General, 2d Logistical Command, who was to be the commander of the Peninsula Base Command, to prepare a detachment of 35 officers and 95 men for movement from Fort Lee to Opalocka Air Force Base to establish the base command. An advance party arrived at Opalocka Air Force Base by 24 October, but USCONARC did not officially establish the base command until 30 October.²⁸

The primary mission of the Peninsula Base Command was to operate the Army staging area commands and terminal commands and to provide administrative and logistic support as required. In addition, it was responsible for all emergency supplies and aerial resupply. At the direction of USCONARC, Third Army on 30 October transferred to the operational control of Peninsula Base Command all logistical-type forces required for the support of operating forces in Florida. Peninsula Base Command had as a major subordinate element the Transportation Terminal Command, Southeastern Activity (to be activated at Port Everglades from personnel and resources of the Army Transportation Terminal Command, Atlantic, an agency of the Army Materiel Command). There was also to be a Transportation Group (Movement Control) and a Medical Group.²⁹

The 507th Transportation Group (Movement Control) was alerted for movement on 23 October and directed to move to Opalocka Air Force Base on 26 October. Its mission was to provide liaison teams at all staging bases in Florida and at all surface ports of embarkation being used. It was attached to Peninsula Base Command for operational control on 30 October.³⁰

The relationship of Peninsula Base Command to Third Army was not clearly defined. The situation was further complicated when the Commanding General, USCONARC, acting as CINCARLANT, established an advance headquarters (USARLANT Forward) at Homestead AFB, from which he intended to exercise operational control of Army forces in the Atlantic Command. A CONARC review committee later found that USARLANT command relationships had not been clearly or formally defined and concluded that better use of the existing command structure should have been made. In particular, the committee felt, the primacy of the Commanding General, Third

28. (TS) Kugler, U.S. Army's Role in the Cuban Crisis, p. IV-23.

29. Ibid., p. IV-23. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 73.

30. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 74-75.

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Army, should have been respected; he should have been made responsible for controlling Army operating forces, and 2d Logistical Command (Peninsula Base Command) should have been placed under his operational control.³¹

Whatever the merits of the organization in the forward area, USCONARC continued with the task of pre-positioning units.

[REDACTED] The same day, 23 October, USCONARC directed Fourth Army to move the [REDACTED]

A number of problems required solution by USCONARC/CINCLANT in the early phases of pre-positioning troops. The US Army Transportation Terminal Command, Atlantic, created the first problem when it notified USCONARC that the ports of Savannah and Charleston would be used to outload the [REDACTED]. USCONARC immediately informed the DA that the port of Savannah had been rejected in favor of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the light of overall requirements. Use of the ports of Savannah and Charleston would cause serious disruption in the movement schedules because of the tight turnaround times developed by the contingency planners in those schedules. USCONARC did not intend to change the current movement schedules unless required to do so by operational necessity, and by 26 October CINCLANT was able to confirm to CINCLANT that Fort Lauderdale was the outloading port for the first increment of Task Force Charlie.³³

Another problem was a shortage of railcars for surface movement of both combat and support units. The Office of the Chief of Transportation directed USCONARC to request rail equipment from the Defense Transportation Management Service for immediate positioning at designated home stations. The Chief of Transportation recommended that the units begin loading their equipment

31. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 72, 242. (TS) Kugler, U.S. Army's Role in the Cuban Crisis, pp. 19-20.

32. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 63.

33. Ibid., pp. 64, 68.

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as soon as railcars were in position. But later that day, 23 October, the Defense Transportation Management Service informed the transportation officer at Fort Hood that it could furnish only 11 day coaches for the movement of the first increment of Task Force Charlie. This number was only sufficient for the first train that was scheduled to depart Fort Hood that day. The Defense Transportation Management Service was unable to forecast when troop cars for subsequent increments would be available. However, flatcars to move the [REDACTED] equipment were available in ample supply.³⁴

The Chief of Transportation, on 24 October tried to alleviate some of the problems caused by the necessity to transport heavy equipment for the units assigned to or supporting the OPLAN by authorizing the use of USAX 100-ton heavy-duty flatcars assigned to STRAC rail equipment pools. Such cars were to be used only when movement requirements could not be satisfied through commercial or other DOD interchange fleet capabilities. Upon completion of the required movements, the STRAC pool cars were to be returned to their original pools unless otherwise directed by the Chief of Transportation or by USCONARC.³⁵

Elements of the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on the morning of 26 October. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] were moved immediately to Fort Stewart. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] While the original movement schedules called for the retention of the [REDACTED] planning was already under way on 26 October to move the entire division to Fort Stewart (with the exception of certain units numbering 1,000 personnel, which were scheduled for outloading in other areas). It was planned to unload all wheeled vehicles upon arrival at Fort Stewart for eventual overland convoy movement to the outloading port. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Although rail equipment had not yet been spotted in the home station area to move the fifth and sixth increments of the task force, USCONARC/CINCARLANT estimated that the move of all four scheduled increments to Fort Stewart would be completed by 29 October.³⁶ [REDACTED]

Of

34. Ibid., p. 64.

35. Ibid., pp. 66-67.

36. Ibid., p. 67.

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this total, 264 flatcars remained under load in the Fort Stewart area to facilitate movement to the outloading port.³⁷

For better control of shipping schedules and of movements of troops and supplies, the Commanding General, US Army Transportation Terminal Command, Gulf, in New Orleans established a joint operations center in close coordination with the MSTS and the Overseas Supply Agency, New Orleans. He also established liaison with the 2d Infantry Division at Fort Benning and the 1st Armored Division at Fort Hood. He advised the US Army Materiel Command on 26 October of specific procedures by which he would assume operational control of all units on their departure from their home stations and would coordinate their lift to proper locations in the event the OPLAN was executed.³⁸

After the JCS decision on 26 October designating the plan to be followed, USCONARC/CINCARLANT changed the outloading for the

[REDACTED]

The revision of the movement schedules also changed the arrival time of the

[REDACTED]

On 27 October the DA accepted the change of outloading ports for the

[REDACTED]

A lack of proper storage space for loaded equipment cars at Fort Stewart created a major problem when elements of the

[REDACTED]

Rail storage at Fort Stewart consisted of some 6-1/2 miles of railroad siding capable of holding about 140 flatcars. CINCARLANT tried to procure additional rail siding capacity in the vicinity of Fort Stewart, requesting appropriate rail storage at neighboring Hunter Air Force Base. After CINCARLANT made a request to the DA, the Strategic Air Command instructed

37. Ibid., p. 74.

38. (TS) Schnabel, U.S. Army in the Cuban Crisis, p. 72.

39. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 68.

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Eighth Air Force to give maximum support to the Commanding General, Fort Stewart, by providing on-base rail sidings at Hunter Air Force Base.⁴⁰

On 29 October the Department of the Army authorized USCONARC to issue movement directives for all those units which at that time, were assigned to or in support of OPLAN 316. These directives were to be effective as orders only upon receipt of instructions from higher headquarters to implement the OPLAN.⁴¹

Another problem area was that of providing shipping for the amphibious assault phase. The Army Task Force was dependent on the US Navy for amphibious shipping. Some of the units scheduled for transport in these amphibious vessels were to outload from the port of Savannah, where there were no LST ramps. The pre-positioning of Task Force Charlie at Fort Stewart required immediate construction of four LST ramps at the port of Savannah; these were completed on 31 October.⁴²

The planning group that had developed the original shipping requirements had assumed that Task Force Charlie would be carried in modern LSTs, which were basically 1,000-deadweight-ton vessels. But the four LSTs that the US Navy allocated to USCONARC for Task Force Charlie were of World War II vintage with maximum capacity of 500 deadweight tons each. World War II experience had proved that a maximum load of 600 deadweight tons could be achieved with little difficulty in landing over the beaches, but a load of 800 or more deadweight tons would require the ship to beach farther out in the water. In the latter case either the vehicles would have to be waterproofed or a causeway landing would have to be made. During the amphibious training exercise conducted for the first increment of Task Force Charlie in November 1962, the four LSTs were loaded to a maximum weight capacity (3,900 tons) and a causeway pier of four sections was added to the increment's equipment.⁴³

At the beginning of November, USCONARC directed that Task Force Charlie introduce [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the commercial charter of four LSTs, and the MSTs arranged the charters in matter of three days.⁴⁴

⁴⁰. Ibid., p. 701.

⁴¹. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis, p. 69.

⁴². Ibid., p. 126.

⁴³. Ibid., p. 127.

⁴⁴. Ibid., p. 219.

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USCONARC logistical and movement planners later concluded that the availability of amphibious shipping within the active military establishment was insufficient, and suggested that additional sources of LST- and LSD-type ships be identified by the Naval authorities to insure the procurement of whatever was required to lift the assault elements of the landing force to the objective area. The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCLANT to place all 11 LSTs in the US Navy Reserve Fleet in a category I condition (25 percent crewed but operationally ready within 48 to 72 hours after alert notification).⁴⁵

USCONARC movement planners had had a number of problems with the two roll-on roll-off vessels, USNS TAURUS and USNS COMET, existing at that time. They had found that the vessels needed special piers at both origin and destination terminals, and this limitation made them unsuitable for assault operations. The proper use of roll-on roll-off vessels would have to be decided at future surface movement planning conferences, they later pointed out, as would the question of water terminals to be used during the execution of OPLAN 316 both for embarkation of troops and shipment of supplies and for reception in the objective area. The planners recommended the development of best possible port operations and capability plans to facilitate the preparation of shipping annexes to the contingency plans. USCONARC planners recommended to the Chief of Transportation that terminal representatives have port capability studies available during any future surface movements scheduling conferences. They also pointed out that the tactical concept of any operational plan had to take into consideration a requirement to develop rapidly port or other terminal capacities and to exploit existing facilities, elements that had been lacking in the OPLAN.⁴⁶

In spite of these transportation problems, the movement of forces in support of the OPLAN continued, readying the United States for operations against Cuba. The Soviet Union, however, removed the offensive missiles from Cuba, and the United States did not launch an invasion of the island. By the end of November 1962, when the US forces returned to home stations, a total of

[REDACTED]

During the partial implementation of the OPLAN, a number of movement control problems arose. A basic one was the inadequacy

⁴⁵. Ibid., pp. 234-235.

⁴⁶. Ibid., p. 235.

⁴⁷. (TS) Kugler, U.S. Army's Role in the Cuban Crisis, p. VII-23.

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of the advanced planning. Many requirements set forth in the OPLAN, particularly those concerning reports, lacked sufficient detail or proper clarity, and the plan did not clearly delineate responsibilities assigned to various agencies. In addition, enemy situation changed rapidly and developed unforeseen requirements. The preparations to execute the plan revealed that coordination between the plan and the counterpart plans developed by other headquarters or Services was inadequate. Also, there were no headquarters-wide standard operating procedures for implementing contingency plans, and no pretested procedures existed for the establishment of an emergency operations center.⁴⁸

It was soon evident that a critical requirement existed for the establishment of a movements control capability at the USCONARC level and also at the level of the continental armies. It was the consensus of the USCONARC logistical staff that this function was as vital to the Army's readiness posture as were training, supply maintenance, and communications. As a result, a movements control nucleus was established in the Plans Division of the USCONARC Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. But during the Cuban crisis, USCONARC had to improvise management tools, devices, and procedures, rather than executing a planned system of movement control.⁴⁹

Another factor hindering movement control was the lack of a unit designator system, compatible with the needs of both supply procedures and movement reporting, that could have identified units, active or reserve, regardless of size. In early 1963, USCONARC forwarded to the DA a series of recommendations concerning the need for a revised, simplified, and standard procedure for unit movement reporting. To meet such a need, a transceiver capability was needed by the logistical command operating in the objective area. At the beginning of the Cuban crisis, however, [REDACTED] possessed neither the necessary data processing equipment nor the personnel to operate such a system, though USCONARC did subsequently assign a transceiver capability and the required supporting Signal unit.⁵⁰

Another problem area affecting movements and their control was the use of the Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON) system. The USCONARC logistical planning staff considered the DEFCON system of vital importance in the execution of contingency plans, since

⁴⁸. (TS) Moenk, USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Missile Crisis, p. 226.

⁴⁹. Ibid., p. 234.

⁵⁰. Ibid.

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the warning time it provided created the environment in which improved force readiness could be achieved. The DEFCON system, they were convinced, was the catalyst to complete certain required actions, including the tailoring of service support units, reallocation of personnel and critical items of equipment, and arrangements for commercial and military transport of their movement. The use of the DEFCON system started a chain of interrelated actions both at the USCONARC headquarters and within the subordinate commands and also initiated action by MSTs, MATS, and the Defense Traffic Management Service, as well as by commercial carriers who controlled the movement of resources on which the Army depended. Consequently, the CONARC logistical planners concluded that USCONARC's readiness depended to a great extent on the margin of warning it received through the DEFCON system. But during the Cuban crisis, they believed, the required DEFCON was not instituted promptly enough, nor was it raised high enough. In the actual preparations, many actions were taken that should have occurred under DEFCON 1 status, yet only A DEFCON 3 was actually put into effect.⁵¹

The necessity of providing support units for contingency plans was another lesson learned from the Cuban crisis. Sufficient support units for the expanded concept of the OPLAN were not available within the active forces of the United States; hence those units could not have been made available within the required reaction times regardless of the movement control procedures employed.⁵²

Evaluation of Navy Movement Control in the Cuban Crisis

At one point in the Cuban crisis CINCLANT had over 180 ships and 100,000 men involved in naval operations to establish the quarantine of Cuba, to reinforce the Guantanamo Naval Base, and to support other elements of the unified command. The logistic efforts needed to service these operations were provided by the Service Force, US Atlantic Fleet (SERVLANT). In the week following President Kennedy's speech, SERVLANT organized and dispatched the necessary units to supply these naval operations.

SERVLANT had to react to the increased demand for supplies for the Cuban crisis with very little pre-positioning. Service Squadron Four was already advantageously positioned in support of an amphibious exercise off Puerto Rico, and a training mission

51. Ibid., pp. 227, 236.

52. Ibid., p. 237.

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enabled the USS HYADES to very quickly remove evacuees from Guantanamo. But in general tankers, tenders, salvage and towing ships, and the other necessary vessels had to be deployed in late October.⁵³

Despite the emergency nature of the supply deliveries, movement control often functioned very well. For example, from 21 October to 25 October MATS lifted a 3,600-man Marine battalion from Camp Pendleton to Guantanamo. In the same period another battalion arrived from Cherry Point, North Carolina. Planes were landing at Guantanamo every ten minutes and still averaged only 1-1/2 hours turnaround time.⁵⁴

However, movement of the heavy equipment and supplies needed by the construction battalions to reinforce Guantanamo defenses was less easily accomplished. Normal COMPHIBLANT transportation had to be augmented by SERVLANT ships, and finally commercial shipping was needed to move necessary rolling stock into Guantanamo for construction of defenses. The large quantities of equipment and material needed by the construction battalions gave them a perpetual transportation problem.

Throughout the Cuban operation none of the major items needed was in short supply. Fuel, provisions, stores, and freight were all available. The USS INDEPENDENCE and the USS ENTERPRISE were able to maintain their fuel stocks at near capacity, though minor problems in the movement of supplies did appear.

At the beginning of the operation backlogs of both air and surface freight increased rapidly. Much of this backlog was the result of the heavy demands placed on shipping by the Guantanamo defense construction project. MATS increased its airlift capacity and together with organic airlift moved the supply backlogs out to Guantanamo and Roosevelt Roads. This rapid influx of air freight in turn caused backlogs at both bases. The cause of the problem there was the inability of these activities to handle the increased volume because of personnel limitations and the unavailability of aircraft and surface shipping to deliver the material to units at sea.⁵⁵

Surface freight movement problems also developed. The two SERVLANT AK ships were committed to support the fleet ballistic

53. (S-GP 3) COMSERVLANT Documentary of Cuban Operations, 31 Dec 62, pp. 1, 2.

54. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 95.

55. (S-GP 3) COMSERVLANT Documentary, p. K-4.

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missile tender complex. Consequently no organic shipping was available to establish a regular and direct delivery of surface freight to task force units at sea. Surface freight movement was accomplished much less satisfactorily by the use of auxilliary naval craft (AF, AO, AKS) and other organic units that were available. Commercial bottoms had to be utilized to make scheduled deliveries to bases at Guantanamo, Roosevelt Roads, San Juan, Trinidad, and Kingston. Commercial shipping was the least satisfactory method of supply, since it required a double handling of cargo, further strained the overloaded Caribbean ports, and diverted underway replenishment ships or combatants for pickup and delivery at sea.⁵⁶

After an unsuccessful attempt to use Mayport as the base of operations for both AKS and AF ships, it was determined to revert to Norfolk for support of both types of ships. At sea the AF ships operated effectively, but they were considerably handicapped by communication backlogs of as many as three or four days. The chief problem in AF operations, however, proved to be the surplus of provisions on hand when the Cuban operation was cancelled. AKS shipping was also delayed by the communication backlog, and the wide dispersal and rotation of ships proved to be a serious problem.⁵⁷

All shipping assigned to PHIBLANT for the Cuban operations was assembled and formed into a task force by 2 November. For the control of MSTS and commercial shipping to be used in the Cuban operations, COMPHIBLANT, with the concurrence of the Commander of MSTS and CINCLANT, worked out the following procedure; the COMSTSLANT or COMSTS GULF would place the ship on berth; the Army Task Force Commander would load the ship; a MSTS representative would sail the ship to a control point determined by the Naval Task Force Commander in the objective area. There a designated subordinate of the Naval Task Force Commander would assume operational control of the ship by direct contact and order it to an unloading site or holding area. Once unloaded, the ship would be returned by the Naval Task Force Commander's subordinate to a destination specified by MSTS. This procedure was never implemented, since no operations were conducted against Cuba.⁵⁸

Air Force Movement Control

CINCLANT OPLANs specified the materiel requirements that would be placed upon the Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) under

⁵⁶. Ibid.

⁵⁷. Ibid., p. K-6.

⁵⁸. (TS) CINCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis, p. 146.

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various tactical and political conditions. As early as June 1962 AFLC was able to begin making its own plans for moving the required amounts of war readiness materiel (WRM) needed.⁵⁹ The air preparation phase of this plan had been relatively simple because it had assumed that the Cubans possessed only a rudimentary air defense capability. The evidence produced in August 1962 showed that the Cubans were rapidly acquiring a modern air defense system, and on 7 September 1962, the TAC established a planning group to develop a new air plan. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force did not approve this plan until 27 September 1962, and not until 4 October did AFLC receive the newly established requirements for equipment and materiel movement, which had now been expanded to cover all three OPLANs.⁶⁰ Even then AFLC had no firm in place date for the pre-positioning of the necessary WRM. As late as 13 October 1962 the AFLC informed its air material areas that the USAF had approved 3 November as the in place date for the first seven days' WRM at the operating bases. Four days later, on 17 October, AFLC was directed to complete delivery of the initial WRM by 20 October.⁶¹

By midnight 19 October all supplies were in place except some that were unavailable (fuel tanks and pylons).⁶² Support equipment and over 11,000 personnel were on standby. WRM such as munitions, fuel, and vehicles were in place, more were enroute, and backup depot stocks were available. The fuel required to support the operation was calculated at over one million barrels, and this amount and more was readily available. The total tonnage of supplies and equipment, not including fuel, that was moved into the employment bases was over 18,000 tons.⁶³

Deployment of tactical units to Florida was then able to begin on 20 October, and by 22 October all TAC combat forces,

59. (S-GP 3) Barr O. Braman and Dorothy L. Miller, History of the Air Force Logistics Command, 1 July 1962-30 June 1963, Pt II, Historical Research Division, Air Force Logistics Command, 1964, p. 2 (hereafter cited as AFLC History).

60. (TS) ~~OSCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis~~, (S-GP 3) AFLC History, pp. 162-163.

61. (S-GP 3) AFLC History, pp. 2, 3.

62. (TS-GP 1) The Air Force Response to the Cuban Crisis, USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, 1963, p. 7. (S-GP 3) AFLC History, p. 4.

63. (TS) ~~OSCLANT Historical Account of the Cuban Crisis~~, p. 6. (S-GP 3) AFLC History, p. 164.

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support personnel, equipment, and munitions were in place.⁶⁴ The Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, himself a former AFLC Commander, remarked that "never before had the logistics side of the house been ready and waiting while the rest of the folks got ready."⁶⁵

In subsequent evaluations of its performance in the Cuban missile crisis, however, the Air Force was quick to point out that the swift completion of the assigned supply buildup occurred under nearly ideal conditions. The crisis did not involve actual combat; rather the deployed US forces acted as a deterrent to hostilities. Hence AFLC had to overcome only the problems involved in supporting the employment bases, not in supporting combat operations. The AFLC had needed only to use the relatively short supply pipelines in the United States; there were no diplomatic problems or delays involved in a movement on to foreign soil. AFLC might have been sorely pressed to supply some critical items to all the deployed forces if it had been necessary to mount more than one such operations. Finally, the Cuban crisis was clearly the gravest sort of threat to our security since World War II, and the size of the threat supplied an impetus which might have been lacking under less crucial circumstances.⁶⁶

After the initial deployment of men and supplies into position for the Cuban assault, the primary mission for MATS, AFLC, and the 14,000 reservists called to active duty was expected to be combat support.

Since the OPLANS were not executed, however, effectiveness of the movement control of these units under combat conditions remained untried.

Despite the favorable overall record of the Air Force, problems of considerable magnitude did arise during the deployment of forces in October. Perhaps it was only the relatively small size of the reaction to the Cuban missiles that permitted such a successful movement of personnel and supplies. At the request of the AFLC, the USAF headquarters organized an ad hoc committee to evaluate the logistical efforts in the Cuban Crisis.⁶⁷

64. (TS-GP 1) Air Force Response, p. 6.

65. (S-GP 3) AFLC History, p. 4.

66. Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

67. Ibid., p. 20.

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The committee noted two problems that affected movement control. First, many of the consumable items required in the crisis had not been procured by AFLC or were not available in the AFLC logistics system, chiefly because funding had not been provided. As a result these items had to be withdrawn from US and overseas bases. In many instances AFLC expended a large proportion of the available military airlift capability to move these items to the deployment bases. Second, during the crisis there was no control office in any of the headquarters where all materiel problems could be referred. Consequently each office contacted its counterpart in other commands and piecemeal information existed at all levels. At Headquarters, AFLC, attempts were made to provide information on assets and resource requirements, but no method existed to obtain the desired information on a timely basis.⁶⁸

Command Post personnel at AFLC noted other weaknesses in performance in the Cuban crisis. There was a lack of supply discipline, and there was widespread abuse of high priority requests. Priority 1 through 3 requisitions had flooded the supply system. There was also poor liaison with supply sources outside the Air Force. The Rome Air Materiel Area reported operating commands were reluctant to use Defense Supply Agency centers and went by habit to the AFLC for all materiel support.

Lieutenant General Mark E. Bradley, Jr., AFLC Commander, discussed some of the significant problems that had plagued AFLC. One of the most confusing situations for AFLC was the numerous late changes made in the forces involved. On 19 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff had increased the number of Air Defense Command aircraft at the Florida bases. The aircraft were to be in place the next day. Additional models of aircraft were called for late in the planning stages, and their different logistics needs caused even later changes in the logistics arrangements. Changes in the OPLAN required adding additional deployment and employment bases, requiring changes in shipping orders. AFLC needed better force structure information more quickly and a materiel policy that would enable the command to plan support for a contingency without unduly endangering support for other commitments worldwide.

The procedure to establish WRM requirements was another factor in delaying AFLC support action. During the crisis a delay of at least ten days occurred between the identification

⁶⁸. Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

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of requirements and notification to the operational bases. The delay in establishing priorities and precedence also hampered effective materiel support. On 6 September AFLC asked for target dates for pre-positioning materiel, the precedence rating of the operation, and authority for redistribution of its world-wide assets. But the USAF did not authorize the diversion of overseas stocks for a month and did not give AFLC the firm in-place date of 20 October until 17 October. These delays forced AFLC to divert premium transportation to return items from overseas bases.⁶⁹

In addition, accurate and usable information from aircraft users on the number of personnel and the amounts of cargo to be moved often failed to generate on time. This created delays and resulted in excessive numbers of aircraft at pickup bases. Parking space problems were aggravated and aircraft and crew utilization suffered.⁷⁰

In summary, the Air Force generated the necessary effective logistic support for the Cuban crisis, but it was not a neat job. The AFLC had to meet support requirements without a supporting USAF-approved program. The crisis necessitated crash actions to obtain or redistribute assets with the result that costs were high and normal logistic support was not possible. It was clear that to avoid a similar situation in future emergencies, the Air Force would have to do more advance planning.⁷¹

69. Ibid., pp. 15-18.

70. (TS-GP 1) Air Force Response, p. F-2.

71. (S-GP 3) AFLC History, p. 6.

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited: An International Collection of Documents, from the Bay of Pigs to the Brink of Nuclear War

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